

ANALYSIS OF A “TOWN HALL” INTERVIEW MEETING WITH DR. STEPHEN PETTIT, THE NEW BJU PRESIDENT

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The following report is by Don Jasmin, *The Fundamentalist Journal*, August-September 2014, djfbmhosea46@charter.net.

I thank the Lord for Dr. Jasmin’s spiritual discernment and his willingness to speak out for the truth’s sake. It appears to me that the vast majority of Bible-believing preachers today are perfectly content to watch the battle from the sidelines.

If this were our report, we go further in warning about Bob Jones University, including the error of fundamentalist interdenominationalism. (See the free eBook *In Essentials Unity*, available from www.wayoflife.org.)

AN ANALYSIS OF A “TOWN HALL” INTERVIEW MEETING WITH DR. STEPHEN PETTIT, THE NEW BJU PRESIDENT

By Don Jasmin

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On July 7, 2014, Dr. Steve Pettit, the new President of Bob Jones University was interviewed live in a town-hall format by Marshall Franklin, a BJU “Executive Vice-President,” concerning his goals and plans for BJU, an interview which the F. D. editor watched and took extensive notes. The following article is a personal analysis of this interview.

THE POSITIVES

1. CONVERSATIONAL TONE: Dr. Pettit maintains an excellent “conservational” speech tone rapport with his audiences. He possesses the personal demeanor of a congenial likable gentleman, who also has a unique sense of humor in his public remarks.
2. GENUINE SPIRITUAL BURDEN FOR STUDENTS: The new BJU President obviously has a genuine burden for the spiritual life of BJU students. He desires to “make the chapel program the highlight of the day” for students, a noble goal. [During his seven years as a BJU student, the daily chapel program was truly the “highlight” of the now F.D. editor’s day! Yours truly could hardly wait to get to his seat for those daily chapel sessions!]
3. EMPHASIZES PREACHING: Dr. Pettit states that there is “no virtue in bad preaching.” He desires the best quality in the BJU pulpit and sincerely believes that students “need the old Bob Jones Sr. type sermons,” perhaps as much as any trait in the daily chapel sessions.

4. DESIRE FOR REVIVAL: The BJU evangelist-president believes there is a great need to pray for revival.

THE NEGATIVES

1. ATHLETICS

The “BJU Bruins” athletic sign/symbol dominated the background for the town-hall program, located directly in the center of the backdrop. When questioned about inter-collegiate athletics, Dr. Pettit stated that it was “not a problem,” that it was a “wonderful thing” and that he was “for it.” He was glad that inter-collegiate sports has been “added” to the BJU program. It should and will receive a lot of attention.

[Fundamentalist Journal Ed: For 85 years, BJU successfully operated an “intramural” [in house] sports program only. Inter-collegiate sports has proven to be the **spiritual death** for every Christian college that has ever utilized it!!]

2. ACADEMICS-ACCREDITATION

Dr. Pettit approves it. He noted that BJU has been accredited for 10 years by TRACS, a religious national accrediting association. He also stated that BJU is preparing to submit an application to the regional secular SACS, for which two years’ work will go into the process.

Fundamentalist Journal Ed: Several decades ago, Dr. Bob Jones III wrote a booklet entitled *Taking the Higher Ground: The Accreditation Issues from the **Bible** Point of View*. In that booklet he unapologetically declared: “The **compromises** implicit in an **unholy accreditation alliance** may not appear at first, but it is evident that no man can serve two masters (p.4)...**Regional accreditation is a sellout to the gods of the secular educational world** (p.6).” Question: Who has changed? BJU or the Bible? It’s not the Scripture!

3. BIBLE TEXT ISSUE

Dr. Pettit stated that he “understands” the Bible text “issue carefully,” since he has studied it for 35 years. Both BJU and he take the same stand “as what I was taught” at BJU. Dr. Pettit says he “holds [the] right position” on the Bible. According to Dr. Pettit, the “use or non-use of the KJV should be a **non-issue**” to Bible-believers.

Fundamentalist Journal Ed: BJU adheres to the apostate critical text composed by Bible-denying liberals! The KJV is not a “non- issue” for discerning obedient perceptive Bible-believing Christians, it is a **vital** issue that correctly places professing Christians into two contrasting theological camps: The traditional Received Text—the text received by Bible churches down through the centuries, based upon 98.5 % of extant manuscripts, versus the Critical Text, the text concocted and promoted by apostate liberals based upon 1.5% of the manuscripts.

An Important Omission

In his answers, Dr. Pettit stated that at BJU there are three Bible texts that are sold and used: the KJV-NKJV and NASV. However, Dr. Pettit made an important omission: He failed to state that BJU sells the English Standard Version [ESV], 91.5% of which is word-for-word nothing less than the old liberal Revised Standard Version [RSV]. He also failed to mention that as of 2013, there were 20 shelve rows of ESV for sale at the campus book store [F.D. editor's count], a number that is "inching" close to the number of KJV shelve rows!

Dr. Pettit somewhat reluctantly noted that BJU has about 2850 students enrolled in the undergraduate and graduate divisions for 2014. This writer believes that this decreasing enrollment can be partly attributed to the fact that BJU has lost much of its former KJV Biblicist Fundamentalist constituency due to its defective Bible text stance.

4. THE MUSIC ISSUE

When queried about BJU's stance on the vital music issue, Dr. Pettit simply claimed that BJU took a "centrist" stance on music, a middle "balanced" stand, on which he **never** elucidated or made any qualifying remarks.

Another Notable Omission

When given the opportunity to delineate BJU's position on the essential music issue, Dr. Pettit simply claimed a "centrist" policy for BJU, never once clarifying what the term "centrist" might mean from a musical viewpoint. Here was a golden opportunity for the BJU president to state the university's bold clear outspoken opposition to Contemporary Christian Music [CCM-religious rock!] and Dr. Pettit totally forfeited this choice to make a plain statement. CCM music is the music that is rapidly destroying the inner character of Bible-believing churches, yet the new BJU president did **not** make any statement of any kind about CCM's destructive traits.

Dr. Pettit's silence here actually speaks volumes, since one of his closest friends, Dr. Fred Coleman., the "Department Head" [Dean] of BJU's music division, recently produced a hymnbook that contains 30 hymns by Charismatic heretics whose associations include ecumenical R.C. and New-Age connections! Sadly, that hymnal was **published** by Dr. Pettit's own publishing company, Heart Publications!

5. CHANGES IN DRESS CODE

When asked about BJU's changes in dress codes, Dr. Pettit readily admitted that BJU had made some changes, but claimed that those "changes in dress code" are "just like [the] changes in your local church," and that BJU was "doing pretty good" in that regard.

This writer readily admits that most local churches have made changes—gradual changes—over several decades in clothing apparel codes, but that these changes for the most part are **for the worse, not the better!** Apparel standards have dropped, and these lowering

As he visits the BJU campus each year, this writer can readily note the gradually lowering apparel standards there.

6. BJU'S RELATIONSHIP TO GREENVILLE, S.C. LOCAL CHURCHES

Dr. Pettit rightly stated the importance of students knowing the importance of local churches to student's lives, declaring that of the three most important influences on BJU student lives: (a) Bible classes (b) other classes and (c) local churches; that local churches played the most influential part in the students' lives.

He said he strongly supports the former BJU President's choice to permit dorm students to attend local churches on Sunday morning. He said that he recently met with 52 pastors from Greenville, SC area churches and that it was his desire to work with "like minded" churches, However, he never defined what he meant by that term.

The BJU President said that 17% of S.C. students at BJU come from just 10 Greenville, SC area churches, a fact in which he seemed greatly delighted. QUESTION: Are these 10 churches the same pro-BJU churches that have adopted the ESV and are now also utilizing pro-CCM/CCM music in their services and special music? [While he doesn't possess exact statistics, there are about 10 Greenville area pro BJU churches that have done just that!]

A Conflicting Dilemma?

When Dr. Pettit was questioned about changes at Northland International University [NIU]. Dr. Pettit indicated that he had worked for nearly 30 years for the Northland Camp & Conference Center, 20 years as the evangelist and 9 years as the full-time camp director. He then declared that he would "not [say] one negative thing about a place I love," but then said he was "uncomfortable with changes" taking place there. Ed: You can't have it both ways!

7. NO STATEMENTS OF ANY KIND ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF EVANGELISM, THE GREAT COMMISSION AND THE DEFENSE OF THE FAITH.

Since BJU was built by Dr. Bob Jones Sr. on an intensely evangelistic soul-winning foundation and the corresponding militant defense of the faith, this writer was surprised that **not** even one time were either of these two dual Biblical emphases mentioned, suggested or even inferred by Dr. Pettit. Staunch BJU advocates might claim this was due to lack of time during the one-hour session, but this writer does not concur with that argument.

CONCLUSION

Old-line BJU grads who had hoped for a return to the Bob Jones Sr. type ministry at BJU will be gravely disappointed. In this writer's view, Dr. Pettit is going to continue to pursue the same policies and practices that have been taking BJU down the wrong road for several decades. If you are looking for a Fundamentalist school to endorse and support, this writer suggests that you find a Baptist Bible institute or Baptist College that is owned and operated under a Baptist, N. T. local church auspices.

ADDENDUM

A local Greenville, SC newspaper contained a large picture and accompanying article of a high school senior, along with his family, with the article title that the young man “signs with BJU Bruins” to play “intercollegiate” basketball there while he majors in “Sports Management” at BJU.

Fundamentalist Journal Ed: The public newspaper pictures from BJU all feature intercollegiate athletics. Where are the newspaper pictures for young men who sign up as “preacher boys” at BJU?

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